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"NATURAL" DYES FOR HOME DYEING

Summer is the time to gather and prepare dyes from many of the flowers and other plant materials for next winter's handicraft work. There are certain qualities about many of the natural dyes that give them commercial value in such products as hooked rugs, hand-woven scarfs, coverlets, and other articles made for sale. Many of these dye materials are found growing wild and may be had for the taking.

A great many different plants give yellow dyes so, if one is out of season, another may be used. Among the plants producing various shades of yellow are cotton flowers, broom sedge, goldenrod, zinnias, marigolds, and sunflowers. Onion skins and dahlia flowers give an orange color on wool and coreopsis flowers a dark burnt orange. Camomile flowers give a buff color and lily-of-the-valley leaves a greenish yellow.

Brown is obtained from various nut hulls, especially butternut and hickory nut and from black walnut hulls collected green and dried. Sassafras produces a lovely rose-tan and rose-brown on wool, and also dark brown. Hemlock bark and several other barks are depended on for browns, tans, and yellow browns. Other colors and shades are produced by combining these dyes with other plant materials and occasionally with substances like cochineal that must be purchased.

("Natural" dyes for home dyeing)

The fastness or permanence of a dye is important but no dye is absolutely fast under all conditions. It may be fast to light or to perspiration or to washing but not fast to all three; it may be fast on one fiber and not on another; or it may be fast when dyed by one method and not by another. Wool is the most easily dyed of the textile fabrics and the resulting colors change the least.

The use to be made of the fabric after it is dyed may determine the kind of dye used and the color fastness necessary.

You can test samples for fastness to light and washing, for yourself. If you want to find out whether the dye runs, sew a piece of the undyed material to the back of the dyed sample and then wash, noting whether or not the color "bleeds."

To make these dyes hold their color or combine with other colors, certain chemicals are necessary. Information and instructions for using the different dyestuffs and chemicals may be obtained from ____ _____ (extension service staff) or from the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Meantime it is possible to begin saving flowers and other materials as their season rolls around. Some of them have to be boiled while fresh; others can be dried and the dye made later.

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